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1903

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A bunch of Texas and Arizona birds.

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December 27, 1920.

DEC 27 1920
Atlantic monthly, July 1892, 92
55,920.

A BUNCH OF TEXAS AND ARIZONA BIRDS.

Almost or quite the brightest bird that I saw in Arizona — the Arizona cardinal, well named *superbus*, being a doubtful exception — was the vermilion flycatcher. I had heard of it as sometimes appearing in the neighborhood of Tucson, but entertained small hope of meeting it there myself. A stranger, straitened for time, and that time in winter, blundering about by himself, with no pilot to show him the likely places, could hardly expect to find many besides the commoner things. So I reasoned with myself, aiming to be philosophical. Nevertheless, there is always the chance of green hand's luck; I knew it by more than one happy experience; and who could tell what might happen? Possibly it was not for nothing that my eye, as by a kind of magnetic attraction, fell so often upon Mrs. Bailey's opening sentence about this particular bird as day after day, on one hunt and another, I turned the leaves of her Handbook. "Of all the rare Mexican birds seen in southern Arizona and Texas," so I read, "the vermilion flycatcher is the gem." One thing was certain: this Mexican rarity was not confusingly like anything else, as so many of its Northern relatives have the unhandsome trick of being. If I saw it, ever so hurriedly, I should recognize it.

Well, I did see it, and almost of course at a moment when I was least looking for it. This was on the 5th of February, my fifth day in Tucson. I had crossed the Santa Cruz valley, west of the city, by one road, and after a stroll among the foothills opposite, was returning by another, when a bit of flashing red started up from the wire fence directly before me. I knew what it was, almost before I saw it, as it seemed, so eager was I, and so well prepared; and as the solitary's companionable habit is, I spoke aloud. "There 's the vermilion flycatcher!" I heard myself saying.

The fellow was every whit as splendid as my fancy had painted him, and to my joy he seemed to be not in the least put out by my approach nor chary of displaying himself. He was too innocent and too busy; darting into the air to snatch a passing insect, and anon returning to his perch, which was now a fence-post, now the wire, and now, best of all, the topmost, tilting spray of a dwarf mesquite. Thus engaged, every motion a delight to the eye, he flitted along the road in advance of me, till finally, having reached the limit of his hunting-ground, — the roadside ditches filled with water from the overflow of the irrigated barley fields, — he turned back by the way he had come.

I went home a happy man; I had added one of the choicest and most beautiful of American birds to my mental collection. But one thing was still lacking: flycatchers are not song-birds, but the humblest of them has a voice, and having things to say is apt to say them. My new acquaintance had kept his thoughts to himself.

This was in the forenoon, and after luncheon I went back to walk again over that muddy road between those ditches of muddy water. The bird might still be there. And he was, — still catching insects, and still silent. But so handsome! At first sight most people, I suppose, would compare him, as I did, with the scarlet tanager. The red parts are of nearly or quite the same shade, — a little deeper and richer, if anything, — while the wings, tail, and back are dark brown, approaching black, — the wings and tail especially, — dark enough, at any rate, to afford a brilliant contrast. His scientific name is *Pyrocephalus*, which is admirable as far as

C.

it goes, but falls far short of telling the whole truth about him; for not only is his head of a fiery hue, but his whole body as well, with the exceptions already noted. In size he ranks between the least flycatcher and the wood pewee. In liveliness of action he is equal to the best of his family, with a flirt of the tail which to my eye is identical with that of the phœbe. His gorgeous color is the more effective because of his aerial habits. The tanager is bright sitting on the bough, but how much brighter he would look if every few minutes he were seen hovering in mid-air with the sunlight playing upon him!

Certainly I was in great luck, and I felt it the more as day after day I found the dashing beauty in the same place. I could not spend my whole winter vacation in visiting him, but I saw him there at odd times, — nearly as often as I passed, — until February 17. Then he disappeared; but a week later I discovered him, or another like him, in a different part of the valley, and on the 26th I saw two. The next day, for the first time, one of the birds was in voice, uttering a few fine, short notes, little remarkable in themselves, but thoroughly characteristic; not suggestive of any other flycatcher notes known to me; so that, from that time to the end of my stay in Tucson, I was never in doubt as to their authorship, no matter where I heard them.

All these earlier birds were males in full plumage. The first female — herself a beauty, with a modest tinge of red upon her lower parts — was noticed March 5. Males were now becoming common, and on the 9th, although my walks covered no very wide territory, I counted, of males and females together, seventeen. From first to last not one was met with on the creosote and cactus-covered desert, but after the first few days of March they were well distributed over the Santa Cruz and Rillito valleys and about the grounds of the university. I found no nest until March 27, although at least two weeks earlier than that a female was seen pulling shreds of dry bark from a cottonwood limb, while her mate flitted about the neighborhood, now here, now there, as if he were too happy to contain himself.

The prettiest performance of the male, witnessed almost daily, and sometimes many times a day, after the arrival of the other sex, was a surprisingly protracted ecstatic flight, half flying, half hovering, the wings being held unnaturally high above the back, as if on purpose to display the red body (a most peculiar action, by which the bird could be told as far as he could be seen), accompanied throughout by a rapid repetition of his simple call; all thoroughly in the flycatcher manner; exactly such a mad, lyrical outburst as one frequently sees indulged in by the chebec, for instance, and the different species of phœbe. In endurance, as well as in passion, Pyrocephalus is not behind the best of them, while his exceptional bravery of color gives him at such moments a glory altogether his own. Sometimes, indeed, he seems to be emulous of the skylark himself, he rises to such a height, beating his way upward, hovering for breath, and then pushing higher and still higher. Once I saw him and the large Arizona crested flycatcher in the air side by side, one as crazy as the other; but the big *magister* was an awkward hand at the business, compared with the tiny Pyrocephalus.

It was good to find so showy a bird so little disposed to shyness. At Old Camp Lowell, where I often rested for an hour at noon in the shade of one of the adobe buildings, the bachelor winter occupants of which were kind enough to give me food and shelter (together with pleasant company) whenever my walk took me so far from home, our siesta was constantly enlivened by his bright presence and his engaging tricks. One day, as he perched at the top of a low mesquite, on a level with our eyes, I put my glass into the hand of the younger

of my hosts. He broke out in a tone of wonder. "Well, now," said he (he spoke to the bird), "you are a peach." And so he is. It is exactly what, in my more old-fashioned and less collegiate English, I have been vainly endeavoring to say.

And to be a "peach" is a fine thing. A vivacious living essayist, it is true, who is probably a handsome man himself, at least in the looking-glass, declares that "male ugliness is an endearing quality." The remark may be true — in a sense; by all means let us hope so, seeing how generous Nature has been with the commodity in question; but I am confident that the female vermilion flycatcher would never admit it. As for her glorious dandy of a husband, there can be no doubt what opinion he would hold of such an impudent reflection upon feminine perspicacity and taste. "A plague upon paradoxes and aphorisms," I hear him answer. "If fine feathers don't make fine birds, what in Heaven's name do they make?"

It was only two days after my discovery of the vermilion flycatcher (if I remember correctly I was at that moment on my way to enjoy a third or fourth look at him) that I first saw a very different but scarcely less interesting bird. I was on the sidewalk of Main Street, in the busy part of the day, my thoughts running upon a batch of delayed letters just received, when suddenly I looked up (probably I had heard a voice without being conscious of it) and saw swifts shooting overhead. People were passing, but it was now or never with me, and I whipped out my opera-glass. There were six of the birds, and their throats were white. So much I saw, having known what to look for, and then they were gone, — as if the heavens had opened and swallowed them up. It was a niggardly interview, at pretty long range, but a deal better than nothing; enough, at all events, for an identification. They were white-throated swifts, — *Aëronautes melanoleucus*.

Three days later a flock of at least seventeen birds of the same species were hawking over the Santa Cruz valley, and now, as they swept this way and that at their feeding, there was leisure for the field-glass and something like a real examination. To my surprise (surprise is the compensation of ignorance) I saw that they had not only white throats, as their name implies, but white breasts, and more noticeable still, white rumps. Those who know our common dingy, soot-colored chimney swift of the East will be able to form some idea of the distinguished appearance of this Westerner: a considerably larger bird, built on the same rakish lines, shooting about the sky in the same lightning-like zigzags, and marked in this striking and original manner with white. I saw the birds only four times afterward, the last time on the 17th of February. The explanation of their sudden appearance and disappearance at such a season is beyond my guessing; but I am glad I saw them. Indeed I can see them now, their white rumps lighting up as they wheel and catch the sun. It pleases me to learn that it is next to impossible to shoot them, and that they are scarce in collections. So may they continue. They were made for better things.

The most *beautiful* bird that I saw in Arizona (so I think, but one speaks of such matters under self-correction, as the mood changes) was the Arizona *Pyrrhuloxia*. I should be glad to give the reader, as well as to have for my own use, an English name for it, but so far as I am aware it has none. It has lived beyond the range of the vernacular. My delight in its beauty was less keen than naturally it would have been, because I had spent my first raptures upon its equally handsome Texas relative of the same name a few weeks before. This was at San Antonio, in the chaparral just outside the city. I had been listening to a flock of lark sparrows, I remember, and looking at sundry things, where almost everything

was new, when all at once I saw before me at the foot of a bush the loveliest bunch of feathers that I had ever set eyes on. Without the least thought of what I was doing I began repeating to myself under my breath, "O my soul! O my soul!" And in sober truth the creature was deserving of all the admiration it excited: a bird of the cardinal's size and build, dressed not in gaudy red, but in the most exquisite shade of gray, with a plentiful spilling of an equally exquisite rose color over its under parts. Its bright orange bill was surrounded at the base by a double ring of black and rose, and on its head was a most distinguished-looking, divided crest, tipped with rose color of a deeper shade. It was loveliness to wonder at. I cannot profess that I was awe-struck (not being sure that I know just what that excellent word means), but it would hardly be too much to say that "as I passed, I worshiped."

The Arizona bird, unhappily, was not often seen (the Texas bird treated me better), though when I did come upon it, it was generally in accessible places (in wayside hedgerows) not far from houses. No one could see either the Texas or the Arizona bird for the first time without comparing it with the cardinal, the two are so much alike, and yet so different. The cardinal is brighter, but for beauty give me Pyrrhuloxia. I do not expect the sight of any other bird ever to fill me with quite so rapturous a delight in pure color as that first unlooked-for Pyrrhuloxia did in the San Antonio chaparral. It was like the joy that comes from falling suddenly upon a stanza of magical verse, or catching from some unexpected quarter a strain of heavenly music.

If Pyrocephalus was the brightest and Pyrrhuloxia the most beautiful of my Arizona birds, *Phainopepla* must be called the most elegant, the most supremely graceful, if I may be pardoned such an application of the word, the most incomparably genteel. I saw it first at Old Camp Lowell, before mentioned, near the Rillito, at the base of the low foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains. At my first visit to the camp, which is six or seven miles from the city of Tucson, straight across the desert, I mistook my way at the last and approached the place from the farther end by a cross-cut through the creosote bushes. Just as I reached the adobe ruins, all that is left of the old camp, I descried a black bird balancing itself daintily at the tip of a mesquite. I lifted my glass, caught sight of the bird's crest, and knew it for a Phainopepla. How good it is to find something you have greatly desired and little expected!

The Phainopepla (like the Pyrrhuloxia it has no vernacular appellation, living only in that sparsely settled, Spanish-speaking corner of the world) is ranked with the waxwings, though except for its crest there is little or nothing in its outward appearance to suggest such a relationship; and the crest itself bears but a moderate resemblance to the pointed topknot of our familiar cedar-bird. What I call the Phainopepla's elegance comes partly from its form, which is the very perfection of shapeliness, having in the highest degree that elusive quality which in semi-slang phrase is designated as "style;" partly from its motions, all prettily conscious and in a pleasing sense affected, like the movements of a dancing-master; and partly from its color, which is black with the most exquisite bluish sheen, set off in the finest manner by broad wing-patches of white. These wing-patches are noticeable, furthermore, for being divided into a kind of network by black lines. It is for this reason, I suppose, that they have a peculiar gauzy look (I speak of their appearance while in action), such as I have never seen in the case of any other bird, and which often made me think of the ribbed, translucent wings of certain dragon-flies.

Doubtless this peculiar appearance was heightened to my eyes because of the mincing, wavering, over-buoyant method of flight (the wings being carried unusually high) to which I have alluded, and which always suggested to me the studied movements of a dance. I think I never saw one of the birds so far forget itself as to take a direct, straightforward course from one point to another. No matter where they might be going, though the flight were only a matter of a hundred yards, they progressed always in pretty zigzags, making so many little, unexpected, indecisive tacks and turns by the way, butterfly fashion, that you began to wonder where they would finally come to rest.

The two birds first seen — the female in lovely gray — were evidently at home about the camp. The berry-bearing parasitic plants in the mesquites seemed to furnish them with food, and no doubt they were settled there for the season; and at least two more were wintering out among the Chinese kitchen gardens, not far away. Some weeks afterward I came upon a pair in a similar mesquite growth on the Santa Cruz side of the desert. But though in the one place and the other I passed a good many hours in their society, I never once heard them sing, nor, so far as I can now recall, did they ever utter any sound save a mellow *pip*, almost exactly like a certain call of the robin; so like it, in fact, that to the very last I never heard it suddenly given, but my first thought was of that common Eastern bird, whose voice in those early spring days it would have been so natural and so pleasant to hear. I could have spared a dozen or two of thrashers, I thought (not *brown* thrashers), for a pair of robins and a pair of bluebirds. But southern Arizona is a kind of thrasher paradise, while robins and bluebirds desire a better country, and seemingly know where to find it.[1]

In the last week of March, however, there took place, as well as I could judge, a concerted movement of Phainopeplas northward. They showed themselves in the Santa Cruz valley, here and there a pair, until they became, not abundant, indeed, but a regular, every-day sight. Those that I had heretofore seen, it appeared, were only a few winter "stay-overs." Now the season had opened; and now the birds began singing. For curiosity's sake it pleased me to hear them, but the brief measure, in a thin, squeaky voice, was nothing for any bird to be proud of. They sing best to the eye. Birds of the shining robes, their Greek name calls them; and worthily do they wear it, under that unclouded Arizona sun, perching, as they habitually do, at the tip of some bush or tree, where the man with birds in his eye can hardly fail to sight them and name them, across the widest barley field.

One of the birds whose acquaintance I chiefly wished to make on this my first Western journey was the famous canyon wren, — famous not for its beauty (beauty is not the wren family's mark), but for its voice. Whether my wish would be gratified was of course a question, especially as my very modest itinerary included no exploration of canyons; but I was not without hope.

I had been in Tucson nearly a week, when one cool morning after a cold night (it was February 7) I went down into the Santa Cruz valley and took the road that winds — where there is barely room for it — between the base of Tucson Mountain and the river. Steep, broken cliffs, perhaps a hundred feet high, were on my right hand, and the deep bed of the shallow river lay below me on my left. Here I was enjoying the sun,

[1] It should be said, nevertheless, that straggling flocks of Western bluebirds — lovely creatures — were met with on the desert on rare occasions, and once, at Old Camp Lowell, three robins — Westerners, no doubt — passed over my head, flying toward the mountains, in which they are said to winter.

and keeping my eyes open, when a set of loud, clear bird-notes in a descending scale fell upon my ears from overhead. I stopped, pulled myself together, and said, "A canyon wren." I remembered a description of that descending scale. The next instant a small hawk took wing from the spot on the cliff whence the notes had seemed to fall. My mind wavered, but only for a moment. "No, no," I said, "it is not in any hawk's throat to produce sounds of that quality;" and I waited. A rock wren began calling, but rock wrens did not count with me at that moment. Then, in a very different voice, a wren, presumably the one I was in search of, began fretting, unseen, somewhere above my head; and then, silence. I waited and waited. Finally I tried an old trick — I started on. If the bird was watching me, as likely enough he was, a movement to leave his neighborhood would perhaps excite him pleasurably. And so it did; or so it seemed; for almost at once the song was given out and repeated: a hurried introductory phrase, and then the fuller, longer, more liquid notes, tripping quietly down the scale.

The singer could be no other than the canyon wren; but of course I must see him. At last, my patience outwearing his, he fell to scolding again, and glancing up in the direction of the sound, I saw him on the jutting top of the very highest stone, his white throat and breast flashing in the sun, and the dark, rich brown of his lower parts setting the whiteness off to marvelous advantage. There he stood, calling and bobbing, calling and bobbing, after the familiar wren manner, though why he should resent an innocent man's presence so far below was more than any innocent man could imagine.

It would be an offense against the truth not to confess that the celebrated song fell at first a little short of my expectations. Perhaps I had heard it celebrated somewhat too loudly and too often. It was very pleasing; the voice beautifully clear and full, and the cadence of the sweetest; it had the grace of simplicity; indeed, there was nothing to be said against it, except that I had supposed it would be — well, I hardly know what, but somehow wilder and more telling.

Within a few days I discovered a second pair of the birds not far away, about an old, long-disused adobe mill. They were already building a nest somewhere inside, entering by a crack over one of the windows. The female appeared to be doing the greater part of the work, while her mate sat upon the edge of the flat roof and sang for her encouragement, or railed at me for my too assiduous lounging about the premises. The more I listened to the song, the better I enjoyed it; it is certainly a song by itself; I have never heard anything with which to compare it; and I was especially pleased to see how many variations the performer was able to introduce into his music, and yet leave it always the same.

The first pair, on the precipitous face of the mountain, had chosen the more romantic site, and I often stopped to admire their address in climbing about over the almost perpendicular surface of the rock; now disappearing for a few seconds, now popping into sight again a little further on; finding a foothold everywhere, no matter how smooth and steep the rock might look.

The canyon wren is a darling bird and a musical genius; and now that I have ceased to measure his song by my extravagant expectations concerning it, I do not wish it in any wise altered. His natural home is by the side of falling water (I have heard him since, where I should have heard him first, in a canyon), and his notes fall with it. I seem to hear them dropping one by one, every note by itself, as I write about them. If they are not of a kind to be ecstatic over at a first hearing (a little too simple for that), they are all the surer of a long welcome. Indeed, I am half ashamed

to have so much as referred to my own early lack of appreciation of their excellence. Perhaps this was one of the times when the truth should not have been spoken.

My mention just now of the wren's cleverness in traveling over the steep side of Tucson Mountain called to mind a similar performance on the part of a very different bird — a road-runner — in the same place; and though it was not in my plan to name that bird in this paper, I cannot deny myself the digression.

I had taken a friend, newly inoculated with ornithological fever, down to this mountain-side road to show him a black-chinned hummingbird. We had seen it, to his amazement, on the very mesquite where I had told him it would be ("Well!" he said, — and a most eloquent "well" it was, — when I pointed the bird out as we came in sight of the bush), and were driving further, when I laid my hand on the reins and bade him look up. There, halfway up the precipitous, broken cliff, was the big, mottled, long-tailed bird, looking strangely out of place to both of us, who had never seen him before except in the lowlands, running along the road, or dodging among clumps of bushes. Even as we looked he began climbing, and almost in no time was on the very topmost stone, at the base of a stunted palo-verde. There he fell to cooing (like a dove, I said — I forgot at the moment that the road-runner is a kind of cuckoo), and by the time he had repeated the phrase three or four times we remarked that before doing so he invariably lowered his head. We sat and watched and listened ("There!" one or the other would say, as the head was ducked) for I know not how many minutes, commenting upon the droll appearance of the bird, perched thus above the world, and cooing in this (for him) ridiculous, lovelorn manner.

Then, as we drove on, I recalled the strangely rapid and effortless manner in which he had gone up the mountain. "He did n't use his wings, did he?" I asked; and my companion thought not. I was reminded of a bird of the same kind that I had seen a few days before cross a deep gully perhaps twenty feet in width. "He seemed to slide across," said the man who was with me. That was exactly the word. He did not lift a wing, as far as we noticed, nor rise so much as an inch into the air, but as it were stepped from one bank to the other. So this second bird went up the mountain side almost without our seeing how he did it. A few steps, and he was there, as by the exercise of some special gift of specific levity. He did not fly; and yet it might have "*seemed* he flew, the way so easy was." Take him how you will, the road-runner's looks do not belie him: he is an odd one; and never odder, I should guess, than when he stands upon a mountain-top and with lowered head pours out his amorous soul in coos as gentle as a sucking dove's. I count myself happy to have witnessed the moving spectacle.

I am running into superlatives, but no matter. The feeling against their use is largely prejudice. Let me suit myself with one or two more, therefore, and say that the rarest and most exciting bird seen by me in Arizona was a painted redstart, *Setophaga picta*. It was at the base of Tucson Mountain, close by the canyon wrens' old mill. The vermilion flycatcher, rare as I considered it at first, became after a while almost excessively common. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that forty or fifty pairs must have been living in and about Tucson before the first of April. Unless you were out upon the desert, you could hardly turn round without seeing or hearing them. But there was no danger of the painted redstart's cheapening itself after this fashion. I saw it twice, for perhaps ten minutes in all, and as long as I live I shall be thankful for the sight.

I was playing the spy upon a pair of what I took to be Arkansas goldfinches,

and the question being a nice one, had got over a wire fence to have the sun at my back. There I had barely focused my eight-power glass upon a leafless willow beside an irrigation ditch, when all at once there moved into its field such a piece of pure gorgeousness as I have no hope of making my reader see by means of any description: a small bird in three colors, — deep, velvety black, the snowiest white, and the most brilliant red. Its glory lay in the depth and purity of the three colors; its singularity lay in a point not mentioned in book descriptions, being inconspicuous, I suppose, in cabinet specimens: a line (almost literally a line) of white about the eye. From its position and its extreme tenuity I took it for the lower eyelid, but as to that I cannot speak with positiveness. It would hardly have showed, even in life, I dare say, but for its intensely black surroundings. As it was, it fairly stared at me. I cannot affirm that it added to the bird's beauty. Apart from it the colors were all what I may call solid, — laid on in broad masses, that is: a red belly, a long white band (not a bar) on each wing, some white tail feathers, white lower tail coverts, and everything else black. It does not sound like anything so very extraordinary, I confess. But the reader should have *seen* it. Unless he is a very dry stick indeed, he would have let off an exclamation or two, I can warrant. There are cases in which the whole is a good deal more than the sum of all its parts.

The bird was on one of the larger branches, over which it moved in something of the black-and-white creeper's manner, turning its head to one side and the other alternately as it progressed. Then it sat still a long time (a long time for a warbler), so near me that the glass brought it almost into my hand, while I devoured its beauty; and then, of a sudden, it took flight into the dense, leafy top of a tall cottonwood, and I saw it no more.

No more for that time, that is to say. In my mind, indeed, I bade it good-by forever. It was not to be thought of that such a bit of splendor (I had read of it as a mountain bird) should happen in my way more than once. But eight days afterward (March 28), in nearly the same place, it appeared again, straight over my head; and I was almost as much astonished as before. It was exploring the bare branches of a row of roadside ash trees, and I followed it, or rather preceded it, backing away as it flitted from one tree to the next, keeping the sun behind me. It carried itself now much like the common redstart; a little more inclined to moments of inactivity, perhaps, but at short intervals darting into the air after a passing insect with all conceivable quickness.

And such colors! Such an unspeakable red, so intense a black, and so pure a white! If I said that the vermilion flycatcher was the brightest bird I saw in Arizona, I was like the Hebrew psalmist. I said it in my haste.

This time the redstart was in a singing mood. On the previous occasion it had kept silence, and I had thought I was glad to have it so, feeling that no voice could be good enough to go with such feathers. In its way the feeling was justified; but, after all, it would have been too bad to miss the song. Curiosity has its claims, no less than sentiment. And happily the song proved to be a very pretty one; similar to that of the Eastern bird, to be sure, but less hurried (so it seemed to me), less overemphatic, and in a voice less sharp and thin; a very pretty song (for a warbler), though, as is true of the Phainopepla and most other brilliantly handsome birds (and all good children), the redstart's proper appeal is to the eye. So far as human appreciation is concerned, it need make no other.

I have heard a canyon wren in a canyon, I said. It was a glorious day in a glorious place, — Sabino Canyon, it is called, in the Santa Catalina Mountains.

And it was there, where the ground was all a flower garden, and the dashing brook a doubly delightful sight and sound after so much wandering over the desert and so many crossings of dry, sandy river-beds, — it was there, amid a cluster of leafy oaks (strange leaves they were) and leafless hackberry trees, that I saw my first and only solitaire, — *Myadestes townsendii*. I have praised other birds for their brightness and song; this one I must praise for a certain nameless dignity and, as the present-day word is, distinction. He did not deign to break silence, or to notice in any manner, unless it were by an added touch of patrician reserve, the presence of three human intruders. I stared at him, — exercising a cat's privilege, — for all his hauteur, admiring his gray colors, his conspicuous white eye-ring, and his manner. I say "manner," not "manners." You would never liken *him* to a dancing-master.

He was the solitaire, I somehow felt certain (certain with a lingering of uncertainty), though I had forgotten all description of that bird's appearance. It was the place for him, and his looks went with the name. Moreover, to confess a more prosaic consideration, there was nothing else he could be.

"Myadestes," I said to my two companions, both unacquainted with such matters; "I think it is Myadestes, though I can't exactly tell why I think so."

We must go into the canyon a little way, gazing up at the walls, picking a few of the more beautiful flowers, feeling the place itself (the best thing one *can* do, whether in a canyon or on a mountain-top); then we came back to the hackberry trees, but the solitaire was no longer in them. I had had my opportunity, and perhaps had made too little of it. It is altogether likely that I shall never see another bird of his kind.

For now those cloudless Arizona days, the creosote-covered desert, and the mountain ranges standing round about it, are all for me as things past and done; a bright memory, and no more. One event conspired with another to put a sudden end to my visit (which was already longer than I had planned), and on the last day of March I walked for the last time under that row of "leafless ash trees," — no longer quite leafless, and no longer with a painted redstart in them, — and over that piece of winding road between the craggy hill and the river. Now I courted not the sun but the shade; it was the sun, more than anything else, that was hurrying me away, when I would gladly have stayed longer; but sunny or shady, I stopped a bit in each of the more familiar places. Nobody knew or cared that I was taking leave. All things remained as they had been. The same rock wrens were practicing endless vocal variations here and there upon the stony hillside; the same fretful verdin was talking about something, it was beyond me to tell what, with the old emphatic monotony; the hummingbird stood on the tip of his mesquite bush, still turning his head eagerly from side to side, as if he expected her, and wondered why on earth she was so long in coming; the mocker across the field (one of no more than half a dozen that I saw about Tucson!) was bringing out of his treasury things new and old (a great bird that, always with another shot in his locker); the Lucy warbler, daintiest of the dainty, was singing amid the willow catkins, a chorus of bees accompanying; the black cap of the pileolated warbler was *not* in the blossoming quince-bush hedge (that was a pity); the desert-loving sparrow hawk sat at the top of a giant cactus, as if its thorns were nothing but a cushion; the happy little Mexican boy, who lived in one corner of the old mill, came down the road with his usual smile of welcome (we were almost old friends by this time) and a glance into the trees, meaning to say, what he could not express in English, nor I understand in Spanish, "I know what you are doing;" and then,

as I rounded the bend, under the beetling crags, the same canyon wren, my first one, not dreaming what a favor he was conferring upon the man he had so often chided as a trespasser, let fall a few measures of his lovely song. How sweet and cool the notes were! Unless it was the sound of the brook in the Sabino Canyon, I heard nothing else so good in Arizona.

But at San Antonio, on my way homeward, I heard notes not to be called musical, in the smaller and more ordinary sense of the word; as unlike as possible, certainly, to the classic sweetness of the canyon wren's tune; but to me even more exciting and memorable. On a sultry, indolent afternoon (April 9) I had betaken myself to Cemetery Hill for a lazy stroll, and had barely alighted from the electric car, when I heard strange noises somewhere near at hand. In my confusion I thought for an instant of the scissor-tailed flycatchers, with whose various outlandish outcries and antics I had been for several days amusing myself. Then I discovered that the sound came from above, and looking up, saw straight over my head, between the hilltop and the clouds, a wedge-shaped flock of large birds. Long slender necks and bills, feet drawn up and projecting out behind the tails, wing-action moderate (after the manner of geese rather than ducks), color dark, — so much, and no more, the glass showed me, while the birds, sixty or more in number, as I guessed, were fast receding northward. They should be cranes, I said to myself, since they were surely not herons, and then, like a flash, it came over me that I knew the voice. By good luck I had lived the winter before where I heard continually the lusty shouts of a captive sandhill crane; and it was to a chorus of sandhill cranes that I was now listening.

The flock disappeared, the tumult lessened and ceased, and I passed on. But fifteen minutes afterward, as I was retracing my steps over the hill, suddenly I heard the same resounding chorus again. A second flock of cranes was passing. This, too, was in a V-shaped line, though for some reason it fell into disorder almost immediately. Now I essayed a count, and had just concluded that there were some eighty of the birds, when a commotion behind me caused me to turn my head. To my amazement, a third and much larger flock was following close behind the second. There was no numbering it with exactness, but I ran my glass down the long, wavering line, as best I could, and counted one hundred and fifteen.

An hour before I had never seen a sandhill crane in its native wildness (a creature nearly or quite as tall as myself), and behold, here was the sky full of them. And what a judgment-day trumpeting they made! Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim! Perhaps I did not enjoy it, — there, with the white gravestones standing all about me. After all, there is something in mere volume of sound. If it does not feed the soul, at least it stirs the blood. And that is a good thing, also. I wonder if Michelangelo did not at some time or other see and hear the like.

Bradford Torrey.

Gaylord Bros.
Makers
Syracuse, N Y.
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908